

CLEANLINESS AKIN TO GODLINESS.

*From the Rev. H. Scadding's Thanksgiving Sermon,
1850, on Amos iii. 6.)*

The good which I wish especially to point out to you, as derivable from the reflections connected with the observance of this day, is perhaps more of a physical and bodily nature than spiritual,—though I think it will be found that spiritual good is also in an important degree connected with it.

It has been observed in all parts of the world, that in the visitations of the pestilence from which we have but lately escaped, its ravages were the greatest wherever the personal habits of the individuals attacked were uncleanly and otherwise degraded;—wherever there were, about houses and localities, accumulations of filth and stagnant water; wherever there was no sufficient drainage to the houses; wherever there was no free circulation to the pure and purifying air of heaven within the rooms of the houses and in the yards and enclosures around the houses; wherever the houses were in a decayed and rotting state. These things seemed to hold out points of attraction to the deadly visitant.

Now, with a knowledge of these facts existing within our minds, what does reason dictate to us? Surely that these are matters which every man should turn his attention to. It dictates that a strict eye should be kept by the public authorities, and by every one of us individually, on the general cleanliness of all localities,—on the wholesome ventilation of every house, and of the yards and enclosures round every house; and that this should be done not merely

once, just at the moment of the first terror at the approach of the evil, but that a steady and well-sustained vigilance in the matter should be kept up year after year.

What beautiful scenes of cleanliness and order might not our cities and towns and villages and residences present!—with everything within them and about them arranged with a view to the health, the happiness, and the long life of even the poorest and humblest of the inhabitants; with every improvement adopted,—open squares secured,—broad and regular streets laid out, with well-arranged and well-working sewerage, embracing the obscurest as well as the most conspicuous premises!

We, in this young country, have in our hands the easy possibility of effecting all this, more or less, if the attention be kept constantly turned to the point, so as gradually from the outset of our towns and residences to be introducing and acting upon improved plans of building and arranging, and not neglecting the work, until some mighty evil arises, speaking, as it were, with the voice of God, from amidst heaps of the dying and the dead.

We have the opportunity of realizing to a great extent in our cities, towns, villages, and residences, the dreams of many a philosopher in times past, who sketched plans of model towns and communities—utopian abodes, which the difficulties, the trammels and prejudices, the contracted space and past mistakes, of old countries and old cities rendered impossible almost to be attempted. But here in our young and beautiful country, we start free in this matter, with the advantage of having all the experiences of the past at our service; with our eyes open to the errors, the astounding and incomprehensible errors, of our forefathers, who, in the arrangement of cities, towns and dwellings, appear to have had but

an indistinct regard to their wholesomeness when a dense population should spring up. We, profiting by their mistakes, might, if we chose, with comparative ease, have all things around us in our cities and towns arranged in accordance with sound reason and philosophy. We might not perchance secure a complete exemption from the influence of the mysterious visitant, from whose presence this day reminds us we have lately escaped alive, but we should present to the monster less to feed on when he comes.

It is probable that so long as large portions of the old populous cities of Europe and Asia remain as they are now,—close, pent-up, irregular, ill-drained, full of rottenness and decay (and it would seem impossible, without, in many instances, actual demolition and rebuilding, that they should ever be thoroughly otherwise than they are)—it is probable, I say, while this remains the case, that there will every year be wafted from them hitherwards, on the wings of the wind, more or less of subtle poison, to which we shall be exposed; whilst the marshes of the Ganges, where the malaria of the cholera appears first to have originated, and which are well known to be as malignantly active as ever, throw off into the atmosphere, year after year, as from powerful centres of force and motion, fresh waves of pestilential exhalation, each destined ultimately to be felt on the farthest coasts of the East and the West, and administer ever new impulses and energy to an evil which otherwise perchance might die out and disappear.

We may therefore expect to experience, more or less, at intervals, in future times, the influence of this invisible spirit of evil, from which we have recently escaped. But if the knowledge of this possibility shall, among other good results, establish, where they are needed, new habits of personal and domestic cleanliness, and fixed habits of attention to the whole-

someness of houses and localities,—then in the increased amount of health and happiness and longevity, which will be the result, will not evil in this instance, as in so many others in this world, be turned into good? And, if so, may we not conclude and believe that this is one use which Almighty God desires us to make of the circumstances in which we find ourselves? May we not believe that in the permission of this evil to a city or community, "He hath done it," in order that men might so exert and use their faculties and powers of self-protection, as to convert the curse into a blessing?

And be assured that these physical and bodily uses which I desire you to make of the existence of the pestilence of cholera, are not unconnected with spiritual benefits which will accrue to the community at the same time. Were all houses clean and well-ventilated,—were all their inmates personally and thoroughly neat and clean and orderly,—a great step would be gained towards the entertainment, within those houses and by those inmates, of religious hopes and religious habits.

Such a thing as a truly religious man living voluntarily in filthy habits, in a filthy house, cannot be imagined; and in reality could not be. When, then, we have once secured neatness, cleanliness, wholesomeness, and order, in houses, we have done something towards securing the further and nearly-allied blessings of religion and religious influences and habits there; we have done something towards the introduction of true happiness and content to the families and firesides of many, who now, immersed in squalor and misery, are almost ignorant of and utterly indifferent to, the concerns of their souls and of eternity.